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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000051

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ELAB](#) [PREL](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: EYE ON GUINEA,S SOCIO-POLITICAL UNDERCURRENTS

REF: A. CONAKRY 0035

[1](#)B. CONAKRY 0023

[1](#)C. CONAKRY 0162

[1](#)D. CONAKRY 0045

[1](#)E. CONAKRY 0021

[1](#)F. CONAKRY 0048

[1](#)G. CONAKRY 0201

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

[1](#)1. (C) COMMENT. Since the president sacked the communications minister in early January, political and economic tensions in Guinea have generally been high. A persistent atmosphere of uncertainty has many Guineans on edge, especially as we approach the March 31 union deadline for resolving issues related to the January 2007 Accords and possible resumption of a nationwide labor strike. Many political actors are at work, both within the government and the private sector. In recent weeks, there have been a number of incidents, and while some may be unrelated, they point to an increasing build-up of political and economic tensions. Whether or not there is a strike on Monday, Guinea may continue as it has over the last few months. However, the situation is volatile, and the potential for civil unrest is high. END COMMENT.

[1](#)2. (U) As we monitor the political situation in Guinea, Embassy is keeping an eye on the following:

- (SBU) President Conte has been ill, and although he is back in the capital and made a public motorcade tour, it is unclear as to whether he has fully recovered or not.

- (C) Union leaders are divided and suspicious of each other. They may be privately orchestrating things behind the scenes in order to achieve individual interests.

- (C) Civil society is also divided because of infighting over who will succeed Ben Sekou Syllah (the new head of the National Independent Electoral Commission) as the president of the National Council of Civil Society Organizations.

- (SBU) The youth are frustrated by the political and economic situation. They feel no one in the government, nor within the non-government actors, effectively represents their interests (ref A).

- (C) Various contacts in recent months have told Embassy officials that Guinea needs a regime change to effectively address its underlying political and economic problems. Leaders within opposition political parties and the unions in particular, may try to use a possible strike or other civil unrest to push for the president to step down.

- (C) The presidency has not reacted to the arrest and

deportation of close presidential associate, Chantal Colle (ref B). The deportation provides a perfect opening for the president to fire the minister of interior and/or the prime minister. Rumors abound that some kind of retaliation is in the works.

- (SBU) The president appointed a new prefect in Kindia and a new director to the National Communication Commission a few weeks ago (ref C). Both appointments are highly unpopular and seen as either a violation of local law and/or the January 2007 Accords.

- (C) Members of Conte,s inner circle have been very busy over the last few months as they position themselves for possible political eventualities. We continue to hear rumors that Conte,s cronies are pushing the president to sign presidential decrees that would reinstate unpopular former officials and/or fire current members of the consensus government.

- (SBU) Volunteer soldiers mutinied in Forecariah last week (ref D). They held the local government official hostage for three hours after breaking into the armory to steal weapons. The immediate threat was quickly resolved, but resentment from other volunteer soldiers (of which there are a couple thousand) is likely to continue as the military completes its recruitment campaign and fails to deliver on promises to formally integrate these volunteers into the regular army.

- (U) A former prime minister of Haiti, Gerard Latortue, is in Guinea as a UN envoy to help facilitate dialogue. He arrived last week and is scheduled to depart on April 11.

- (SBU) The IMF team is in Guinea reviewing government

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progress on its Poverty Reduction Program. They are putting significant pressure on the government to end the fuel subsidy, and Guinean Government officials say the program will end on March 31.

- (U) The GoG cut fuel deliveries to gas stations by 40% as part of a rationing effort aimed at reducing the cost of the fuel subsidy (ref E). There have been long lines at the gas pump this week and local contacts say that the fuel supply will likely run out over the weekend while the next supply tanker may be delayed by up to a week.

- (U) Prices for staple goods continue to rise, with flour now costing 32% more than six months ago and rice, 35% more (ref F). Prices are expected to continue rising due to international price pressures.

- (SBU) The Ministry of Defense reportedly plans to reduce government subsidies on rice for soldiers, which will significantly increase the cost of living for service men (ref G). In addition, it will cut a major revenue stream since many soldiers buy the cheaper, subsidized rice and then resell it for a profit.

- (U) A few weeks ago, students in Kankan refused to go to classes until the university paid them their stipends. This week, students in Dubreka are doing the same thing. According to a private radio station, students in Kindia reportedly demonstrated on March 27, also in protest of non-payment of stipends.

- (U) Many of Guinea,s teachers, of which there are least 30,000, have not received their regular salaries for months. Econoff witnessed them lining up in front of the Ministry of Education last week in protest.

- (U) On March 27, an internet news site (Guinee24.com) posted an &open letter8 addressed to the Guinean army. The letter was unsigned, but is written as if from the perspective of soldiers. Embassy has not yet confirmed

whether it is legitimate. The letter writers accuse the president of planning to hand over power to his son, Ousmane Conte, and note an influx of 50 mercenaries from Guinea Bissau near the capital. They also cite concerns about the possible reduction in the rice subsidy and demand resolution of the bulletin rouge issue by April 2.

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